

Message Text

SECRET

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM FLASH

S E C R E T STATE 168005

EXDIS, DELIVER TO ASST. SECRETARY SAUNDERS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:LE, MOPS

SUBJECT: TALKING POINT ON LEBANON

1. THE FIGHTING.

-- AFTER AN OVERNIGHT LULL, FIGHTING RESUMED IN BEIRUT SUNDAY AFTERNOON BETWEEN THE SYRIAN PEACEKEEPING FORCES AND CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. THE VIOLENCE, APPARENTLY TRIGGERED BY CHRISTIAN KIDNAPPING OF FOUR SYRIAN SOLDIERS, SPREAD QUICKLY. HEAVY ARTILLERY BARRAGES DIRECTED AT DENSELY POPULATED AREAS HAVE CAUSED MAJOR FIRES AND CIVILIAN DISTRESS. ONE CHRISTIAN LEADER (DANY CHAMOUN) TOLD AMBASSADOR PARKER HE IS CONSIDERING ASKING FOR ISRAELI ASSISTANCE. ALTHOUGH BEIRUT RADIO REPORTED LATE SUNDAY THAT ASAD HAD ORDERED SYRIAN TROOPS TO CEASE FIRE, FIGHTING HAD NOT LESSENED AS OF MIDNIGHT GMT. AT LEAST 22 ARE DEAD, BUT CHRISTIANS, HEAVILY OUTGUNNED, FIGHT ON.

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PRESS REPORTS CHRISTIAN PHALANGE PARTY IS CONSIDERING ASKING VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE TO MEDIATE. SYRIANS INSIST TO US THAT ADF IS FORCED SEEK SILENCE CHRISTIAN FIRE, OR LOSE ITS MANDATED AUTHORITY AS PEACEKEEPER IN LEBANON.

2. ANALYSIS.

-- CHRISTIANS MAY HAVE FIRED FIRST SHOTS ON SATURDAY, BUT SYRIANS REACTED WITH DISPROPORTIONATE VIOLENCE. SYRIAN FONMI TOLD OUR CHARGE LATE SUNDAY THAT SARG BELIEVES PHALANGE ARE SEEKING TO DESTROY PEACE AND SECURITY IN LEBANON AND U.S. MUST SO INFORM PHALANGE AND CHAMOUNIST PARTIES. WE AGREE THAT CHRISTIANS MAY HAVE DECIDED TO CHALLENGE THE AUTHORITY OF PRESIDENT SARKIS. WE ALSO AGREE WITH SYRIAN VIEW THAT LEBANESE GOVERNMENT MUST ASSUME ITS SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES. THE CONTINUING INABILITY OF THE GOL TO END THE CURRENT FIGHTING IS SEVERELY ERODING THE PRESTIGE OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND MAKING A MOCKERY OF THE CENTRAL LEBANESE AUTHORITY. THERE ARE POTENTIALLY CRITICAL RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE SURVIVAL OF LEBANON AND THE PEACE-KEEPING EFFORT IN THE SOUTH.

3. USG ACTIONS

-- IN EFFORT CURTAIL FIRST WAVE OF FIGHTING ON SATURDAY, UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM CALLED SYRIAN AMBASSADOR TO URGE RESTRAINT AND CEASE FIRE. ACTING ASST. SEC. CRAWFORD CALLED MOST SENIOR AVAILABLE ISRAELI TO SHARE OUR INFORMATION AND URGE GOI COUNSEL CHRISTIAN RESTRAINT AND AVOIDANCE PROVOCATION OF SYRIANS. AMB. PARKER HAS BEEN IN CONTINUOUS TOUCH WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS, FONMIN BOUTROS AND CHRISTIAN LEADERS. AS VIOLENCE ACCELERATED
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SUNDAY, WE DISPATCHED INSTRUCTIONS TO REQUEST SAUDIS, FRENCH, VATICAN, KUWAITIS, AND WALDHEIM TO CONSIDER URGENTLY HOW THEY MIGHT ASSIST IN ENDING THE FIGHTING, AND, SUNDAY EVENING, WE ISSUED PRESS STATEMENT CALLING ON ALL PARTIES TO CEASE FIRE.

-- ISRAELIS HAVE CONSIDERABLE LEVERAGE OVER CHRISTIANS AND, AT OUR REQUEST, SENT MESSAGE ON SATURDAY COUNSELLING RESTRAINT. WE ARE APPRECIATIVE OF THIS SPEEDY ISRAELI RESPONSE, BUT IN VIEW RENEWED AND MORE VIOLENT FIGHTING, WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF GOI WOULD REITERATE URGENTLY TO ITS CHRISTIAN FRIENDS NECESSITY TO CEASE FIRE IMMEDIATELY.
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S E C R E T STATE 168005

EXDIS FROM UNA

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 168005 ACTION JERUSALEM DATED JUL 3, 1978.

QUOTE: S E C R E T STATE 168005

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TAGS:LE, MOPS

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